

BACK ON YOUR HEELS



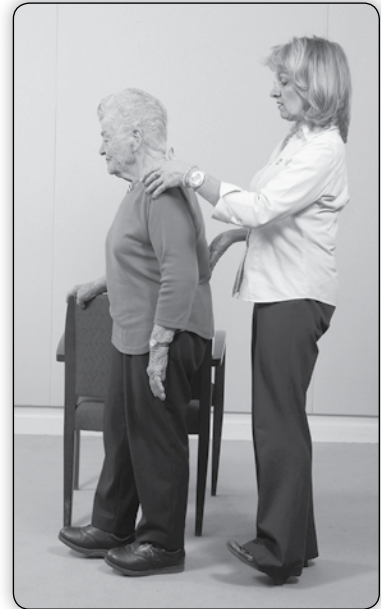
Heel walking compliments toe walking, and heel-toe motion is desirable for gait training. Heel walking tends to pitch the body backward, which can be a scary feeling and may in fact cause a fall. So be careful with any backward movements.

Benefits »

- ⦿ Improves postural control of backward momentum.
- ⦿ Strengthens lower legs.

How to Do It »

- ⦿ Participants stand with one foot a little in front of the other, shoulder-width apart.
- ⦿ Stand beside or behind the participant while the participant holds onto appropriate balance support.
- ⦿ Use the following cues.
 - Knees should be soft and core braced.
 - Shift weight to your heels (hold the chair).
 - Lift your forefeet (one at a time if it's easier, front one first).
 - Balance on your heels.
 - Get used to how that feels. Hold onto the support until you have good balance.
 - Start walking. (It will feel awkward at first.)
 - Try to take 6 to 10 steps and then stop.
 - Rest, relax, and do it again.



Keep It Safe »

Provide plenty of balance support and one-on-one attention. Overlap forearms with participants for greater balance safety with heel walking. They should only do what they are comfortable doing.

Live It »

Heel walking is more difficult than toe walking, but both are good practice for balance and require postural control. Controlling backward momentum is a difficult but practical balance challenge.